826 immortal with smooth limbs, he became mortal and hard working. As seats of the male semen, they transmit this condition to the embryo, formed in the maternal womb by Faro. The weariness felt in the limbs after the sexual act is proof of this transmission. As Locus of [829] the virile semen, framework of the man, and a mechanism suitable for physical labor, the articulations are also the symbol of society. The chief's throne, in the shape of a knee, is the image of its owner's articulated body as well as that of the armature of the social body and of the grouping of individuals under his jurisdiction (1).

1. See p. 178.

826 The limbs represent the right and the left. Rectitude, firmness, 823 and directed action are "right"; incertitude, the spirit of indecision, and inconsistency in behavior are "left." The right is male and 201 symbolizes man's labor; the other is female. All gestures, profane and religious, and all representations of objects bear witness to this. Performing his first task in the fields before the rain, the farmer gives three blows with his hoe held in his left hand in order to absorb the impurity of the earth. After this, he works until the harvest with his right hand. To cross one's hands means supplication, to put them behind one's back means humiliation.

826 Each finger has its value. The little finger, bolokoni lakare, is 201 "the son of the other fingers" and in it is concealed the entire 576 strength of the hand; it "carries the nyama of the fingers." Hence its use as a measure of divinations. To point to someone with one's little finger means to belittle him with respect to those present. Thus one casts a spell (korti) against an enemy or an undesirable person with the little finger.

826 The index finger and the thumb of a chief, formerly those of a 622 king, are marked on certain occasions with signs called bolo ti doniya, "knowledge of the signs of the hand." On the index are drawn three "acts of the world today" (bi dyẽ walew) and on the thumb, two "things of the interior of the secret world" (dyẽ gundo kono fẽw), for it is said that "the knowledge of the signs of the hand /70/ is the road of the creation 5, the index is the world in 3 and the thumb is the new world" (1). The whole represents the worlds thought out by

784 acts more energetically. But it is even more serious to eat one's taboo
783 than to ill it, for then the person cannot get rid of his victim's nyama and must suffer all the consequences.

The guilty person goes to the shore of the Niger and in a loud voice, discloses the facts to Faro while making him an offering (millet mash, copper, etc.), then he drinks a little water and goes home. If he lives too far from the river, he goes to a remote place and acts in the same way by spilling a little of his own blood as a sign of expiation. These acts have the effect of rectifying everything with Faro whom he has offended by breaking the established order. Next, he undergoes the purification rites. Their agent is his ally semãnku and the rites are carried out at an intersection, dangu (1). The effect of such rites is

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1. See p. 183. In certain cases the purification may be carried out by a kinsman of an ascending generation and may include ablutions with water consecrated by a prayer addressed to Faro.

to rid him of his victim's nyama, and then to reinstate the symbol of the eight life-giving cereal seeds in his collarbone: thus he recovers his lost strength. After his recovery, the old men of his family summon him and give him some stern advice for another breaking of the taboo cannot be atoned by any purification: the animal's nyama will no no longer leave the repeating offender who may die of it.

784 Voluntary infractions, which are very rare, of course bring about far more serious consequences for the person in question since his responsibility is involved. This is not so in the opposite case. If a man has eaten his taboo without knowing it during a meal taken at the home of another, the animal's nyama may attack those responsible: either the host or his wife becomes ill. The guilty woman must then
[201] ask the man's forgiveness. On her knee and with her hands at the back, she discloses the facts to the person she has injured who may ask for time to think and make her wait in order to punish her. Otherwise he demands three kola nuts with which he carried out the dyanzani or "replacement." He throws them in the bush or gives them to the first poor person he meets. A few days later the responsible person is liberated.

602 783 that is, sixteen. This fact qualifies him, by his gesture of purification and through his essential role as provider of sustenance, to restore the seeds that had left the guilty man's collarbone. If the offense is slight, the offender gives him millet, money, or an object. The wounded animal's nyama settles on the object, and the senãnku who receives it rids him of it without being affected himself. If the offense is more serious, the two allies go off together to a road intersection, dangu; then the senãnku takes a straw torch in the shape of a cross and circles the guilty man's head with it from left to right. The being who has been offended by the broken taboo can refuse nothing when confronted with this procedure. He removes the nyama he had inflicted and the man, powerfully aided by the forces of the purifying agent, recovers those he had lost, as symbolized by the seeds in his collarbone.

This cathartic role of reinstating subsistence forces into the human body is illustrated in daily life by the food prestations to which the partners are held. This is like the secular and materialistic representation of an invisible operation of purification.

The Person: Exceptional Cases

000 Certain physical peculiarities constitute the manifest evidence of a modification of the elements making up the person. It is appropriate here to examine the cases of individuals who are thus affected.

Twins

845 Twins, flani (literally, two little ones), are two new beings given to men by Faro and considered as his offspring alone. Because of this fact, twins inherit neither the ni nor the dya of a dead person, but they inherit new principles which come to them from the spirit. Moreover, their dya never leaves the water for the shadow, but remains in the hands of the spirit throughout their entire life. Because of this they are protected from all danger and from all impurity.

Such a birth is considered a blessing and is granted only to certain privileged people called kunandi. It is announced by holding up the right and left forefingers without uttering a word, for its announcement would be so powerful that it would harm the newborn. Their mother wraps a white cotton band called dyala about her forehead to indicate the presence of the children's dya /86/ in Faro's hands.

[201]

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Taboos Provided with vital force and a soul, nj, the forge, a living being, is surrounded by taboos aimed at protecting its material and spiritual integrity.

These taboos, numbering seven, are peculiar to the forge and to the altars which it contains; they concern not only the /123/ blacksmiths, but also his clients, the passers-by, whatever sex they may belong.

[259] 1. None may cook meat on the fire of the forge; it would be equivalent to "eating the meat of the Soba spirits." To break this rule deprives the fire of its strength and causes the abdomen of the person breaking the taboo to swell (1).

1. It is said of the culprit: soko dyeni bala, fa ta sababu yalla: "he is full of meat cooked on the fire of the forge."

2. No insult may be uttered near the forge, particularly if it is of a sexual nature (2). This would be equivalent to insulting the fire;

2. Neni teke fã nda la: "Insults are not to be spoken at the door of the forge."

the flame would waver and, despite the bellows, no heat would rise from the hearth.

[201] 3. The sole of the foot and the palm of the hand are never presented to the fire, for the forge is alive and just as these same gestures made towards another human being would bring about physical disorders, so the various parts of the forge are vulnerable and may break (the hammer or anvil) or tear (the membrane of the bellows) (3).

3. Se ndege tere te jira fa na: "The tere of the sole of the foot must not be presented to the forge."

4. Any quarrel or misunderstanding disturbs the forge, upsets it, and harms the work (4).

4. Dadyuguya, filibatya, kunasirinlenya, konodyuguya te ke fã nda la: "Meanness,

794 The rituals in which the mask participates generally /161/ take
796 place the following night in a thicket called komo tu, "bushy one of
201 the Komo," situated in the bush near the village.

As soon as they hear the mask whistling, the members approach according to their age grades, the older ones first. In principle, only those under the jurisdiction of the functioning Komo and their guests are present. However, any initiated stranger who wishes to attend the dances makes his status known by means of the following signs:

1. Shouting "hé" or "ho," he presents his right hand to the mask with all the fingers folded except the index and the little finger which point towards it. The index, in this case, represents the circumcised man, member of the Komo society, in sum, the petitioner. The little finger, which is smaller, expresses this man's submission to the Komo and the fact that he is and will always remain its inferior.

2. He puts a twig of straw in his mouth; the light colored straw signifies that his heart is pure, that he has no evil intention. The mouth, closed over the straw, shows that the man, "understanding the word of the Komo," has no need to speak of it.

3. On his arrival, he says: ani bara (literally, I am with the bara). The masker, hearing these words, crouches and then straightens up suddenly before the newcomer as though to frighten him. The latter then says: "I am a new child of the society" (1). When he is accepted,

1. Ne ye timidɛ̃ kura ye.

the masker resumes the dance and the ceremony continues.

794 The rhythms of the Komo bear the general name of komo bara or
796 komo foli dunu (literally, rhythm of the Komo drums) (2). They are
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2. The word bara is reserved for the rhythms of the masked Komo dances. The rhythms of the profane dances of the elders are called mabere fo, those of the young men, bɔ̃dyala, those of the girls, kofili.

numerous, adapted to the rituals they accompany, each endowed with a separate name. The Bambara classify them into three categories: the rapid, violent, and difficult rhythms performed against the non-initiates; the soft rhythms for circumcision; the sad rhythms for funerals.

881 535 In a compact group, the women and girls of all ages and stations shuffle slowly around the orchestra, while the men drink and sing around small fires of dry millet stalks.

From time to time, upon being invited to do so, one of the girls, soli-ma-moso, gets up, rattles her gourd, and joins the dance with slow, deliberate steps.

At dawn, when they are about to return to their huts, the girls, soli-ma-moso, make one last circuit, and then each one, with her heels together and her hands crossed above her head, makes three leaps into the air. She does this three times.

881 201 The Bambara themselves interpret these various details concerning girls, the soli-ma-moso, as symbolic. The girl's position between her mother's legs recalls physical birth. The white cloth represents the one that at her mother's marriage bore witness to virginity and reminds the girl that she will have to give similar proof to her husband. The dance done with slow, measured steps is the symbol of a child learning to walk, and the nine leaps that close the ceremony attest to the fact that the girl is now an adult. A final rite shows the parallelism between the soli and [246] birth: on the sixth day, the nyana-n-son-na-ba shaves the head of the soli-ma-moso (1).

1. In place of the braided coiffure, young girls wear the magic cord with nine knots, called tafo, on the crown of the head, and this is connected to a similar one, called dyo, at the nape of the neck.

881 End of the soli. On the seventh day, before noon, all the soli-ma-moso go to the well or to the river to wash the soiled clothes and to scour the pots and gourds used for the festival. Then all return to the discipline of the soli: the boys under their tree, and the girls in their huts. The sema watch over the youngsters, who by now are bored with the discipline. About three weeks must pass after the operation before all the soli-ma completely recover.

794 For a certain length of time, the new members are kept
796 in seclusion while being instructed by initiates, especially the older ones, who see to it that they learn the songs and dances and become familiar with the special language. It is in the course of this instruction that they are given certain formulas to use for recognition among the komo-den' (sons of the Komo). The following are two examples and by no means the only ones; each Komo-ya has its own formulas, and in addition the adepts of the various Komo-ya are readily inclined to fraternize, especially when they are alone, far from their respective groups. In such cases, the identical principles of their cults bring them together, and they question each other at once:

[539] --E b' a la wa (Are you a member)?

--M ba' la (I am).

--N'i b'a la, tyoko dyira r na (If you are, show me the secret sign).

[201] This sign varies and is completely arbitrary. Sometimes it involves raising the hand with the fingers spread apart in a certain way; at other times, twigs are placed in a special pattern, and so on. [275]

The Nama

794 This cult arose at an unknown date at Missango (Bélédougou). The head of the Nama at Missango is addressed respectfully as Fura-tigi-ba, meaning literally, "grand master of the fura (fura specifically means "leaf" of a tree and, by extension, "remedy"). This is one of the expressions with double meanings which are so common in the brotherhoods: Fura-tigi-ba, the great physician, great savant, grand master.

The Nama is also called Nama-koro and Suya-koro, and a certain Nama is called Siriman 'fin'.

[778] Objects used in worship include; the Nama-kon-golo-u (craniums of the Nama), which are a kind of headdress, usually made of linge wood and shaped like fantastic birds; the wara-se (literally, "foot of the wara"), a small wooden board about a meter high with three horns affixed to it; and a similar board with two horns, called nye-bla.

844 Before delivery of her child, a woman is advised to pound grain. When the labor pains come, the woman retires to her hut with several matrons (men are not allowed access). If the child is poorly presented, the priest is called. He performs outside the hut, simulating the delivery and chanting the formulas that ease labor. To deliver the infant, the woman kneels with her hands thrown behind her, while the midwife supports the small of her back. At birth the infant's shoulders must touch the ground; this is the moment when he receives his spiritual principles. The infant is washed several times and smeared with karite butter.

846 The mother must not go out during the first eight days after the
853 birth; she must devote herself entirely to the new-born. She massages
854 his head daily in order to give it a more rounded form, and she pinches his nose. She nurses the infant for the first two years, then the weaned child passes directly to the communal calabash. Until the child can walk, the mother carries it astraddle on her back with the aid of a loincloth knotted at her chest. In this manner the infant accompanies the mother everywhere, to work as well as to the dance.
868 It is during these intimate contacts that the mother teaches her child to talk. Later, the little girls stay with their mothers who teach them all the domestic arts, while the boys are educated in outside work.
[867] During their childhood they are taught the usages and rules of deport-
201 ment: a woman knows she must never shake the hand of a man to
576 greet him, and, if he extends his hand, she flings up her arm "as a sign of not being interested." A man will salute his superior by extending his hand palm upwards, and the superior will put his over it; inversely, when a man greets an inferior he extends his hand with the palm down, while for an equal his hand will be perpendicular to the ground. If a man must ask someone's pardon, he puts his hands behind his back to simulate the tail of an animal (for he has acted like an animal). Crossing the hands in front of or upon the head is a sign of sadness. To mark his submission to a king, a man puts his right elbow to the ground. To pray to God, the two hands are extended with the palms turned [89] outward. A woman learns that it is im-
576 pudent to question her husband during the day, and when she speaks
593 of him, she says koke, that is, big brother, for she cannot pronounce
833 his name or in any way recall the bonds which exist between them. It is only during the two consecutive nights that she couples with him

852 with water added (to recall the victory of Faro over Mousso Koroni). The patriarch shakes the family pembélé three or four times over the infant's head to give him the nyama of the recently deceased whose ni and dya he has inherited. Then he places the altar (kere la boli ni) on the infant's chest three times, after having recited a prayer. He cuts the throat of a red cock, dips his index finger in the blood, and traces three or four crosses on the newborn's forehead, who be-
553 comes boli din. The name is given the eighth day by the Komo chief
[431] under the doubalé, where the old people assemble. The father offers 100 kola nuts, two jars of millet beer, plus a ram whose throat is cut, and money for the griot. Part of the baby's hair is shaved off and kept in [90] a case (sebe); another part of the hair is thrown in the river as a sacrifice to Faro. The eldest of the old men examines the roots of the infant's hair and the conjunction of the eyebrows, thus determining its character (téré). Then he swings the baby seven times in an east-west direction and eight times north-south, giving him the first name of the deceased ancestor and, at the same time, his spiritual principles. The griot recite the father's mottoes, the sénanku come to joke with the baby, and the blacksmith traces the scarifications.

845 Twins. We have seen the belief that in the beginning twins were always born, and Faro subsequently punished man by abolishing double births which he no longer accords except to certain privileged persons. For the Bambara, twins are new beings who inherit neither the ni nor the dya of any ancestor. Special rites are observed at their
[201] birth which is announced by showing the raised right and left index fingers, without saying anything, for the proclamation would be so powerful that it would be harmful to the newborn twins (see G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].
553 The rite of name-giving is carried out on the bank of the river. The following day, accompanied by another woman, the mother goes in search of millet and cotton which she gathers in identical calabash ladles. Equal gifts are put in the ladles, which the mother presents
[301] in crossed hands. Later, the twins are fitted with metal bracelets representing their dya, and, in certain regions, with a pendant in the form of double slave irons. The twins always stay together; they
856 wear identical clothes. If one dies in early infancy, the mother places on the mat beside the surviving infant a small doll made by

[846] 852 553 The navel dries between the sixth and eighth day. The headman and elders are told of the event, and all the heads of families (the gouatigou) come and sit in order of age and rank at the entrance door of the hut which opens into the court of the confined woman. The religious head, the gnéna-sonnaba (2), goes alone into the hut

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2. Usually it is the religious head, priest of the dasiri, who shaves the child, but there are exceptions to this rule. In some villages it is the civil head who performs the tonsure; in others this task is the prerogative of a family. Sometimes the shaving is done by the father or the grandfather. The families in which this custom is followed are not pure Bambara but are mixed with Marka blood.

and /170/ shaves the head of the infant on its mother's knees. Long [20] 431 lines of women push into the inner court, clap their hands, let out shrill cries of "kouyo kouyo" as signs of joy, and give their friend a small present of millet and cotton (1).

1. The women give a handful of cotton and about a pound of millet.

When the head of the child has been shaved and well cleaned, the headman lays his hands on him to drive away evil spirits that might wish to harm his life; he gently strokes his back and chest and, spitting lightly, recites a short formula which he alone knows and can understand. Then he goes and sits among his people, and the father presents him with eleven kola nuts on a platter of braided grass. The heads of families, in order of age, place their offering of 40 to 80 cowrie shells (2) on this same platter, and the gnéna-sonnaba asks

2. The men give 40 cowrie shells. The generous ones go as high as 80.